

# You're The Champagne In My Plastic Cup (Jason Mraz)

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*Samantha meets Mr. Top Hat (Jason Mraz) in the most inconvenient way. She clicks with him better than with any guy she's ever met.*

*He woos her in ways unimaginable. Who can resist?*

*But will his music career get in the way of their relationship?*

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## 1 - Of Gawdy Bags & Starbucks Coffee

That annoying sound of trolleys moving itched my ears. Goddamn, was it so hard to grease the wheels once in a while? I scratched the back of my ears, as if the itchy pain in it would go away and clumsily raided my handbag for my iPod while I waited for my luggage to at least peep out on the luggage belt. Just as my back stopped clenching from all that stress and my ears were being filled in with sugar, that small piece of blue luggage appeared.

Timing just loves me, don't it?

Back into that stressed posture of mine, I braced myself for that heavy luggage that awaited me. Oh no, don't let that small baggage fool anyone. No one knows what shoot I have to carry home from the country to my spoilt city-kind-of-girls housemates. I stuffed my iPod into my back pocket, dropped my bag to my feet and wriggled my fingers. Here it comes, I said in my head. One, two—WHOOOP! The bag gripped between my fingers flung off the belt, over my head, and—unfortunately—into someone's face. Maybe I had more strength than I thought.

... Or maybe I took the wrong bag.

Oh. My. God. "I am so sorry," I finished my thoughts out loud. I quickly placed the bag down in front of me and pasted on my apologetic face that usually worked—on half-blind and almost senile grannies. So I hoped to god that I had hit a man close to his grave. When I looked up, I faced this young man, mid-twenties, hair hidden in his striped top hat, one hell of a cute facial expression that was showing pain and a red mark on his right cheek. I held my breath, hoping he wouldn't explode.

So much for holding my breath, "I'm so sorry I mean, I thought it was my bag and my bag is really heavy cos my girlfriends are such spoilt brats asking me for this and that and I have no idea why I'm telling you this." Nervous giggle. Cute giggle? Yeah right, I sounded like a constipating sheep.

He rubbed his face a little then faced me and I quickly stared down at my feet. And just when I thought he was going to lay one in my face, the tall, top hat, buffed arm, crazy nice eyes guy laughed.

LAUGHED! Boy, was I relieved. I heaved a huge sigh before I faced him. Just as my breathing rate went to its normal pace, it stopped completely. He was still laughing and thank god he was because I caught glimpse of his smile. Holy hell, was that a Kodak moment. That smile was pure picture perfect. Excuse me for being dramatic but I can't help it.

"I was wondering why this tiny girl was attacking my bag," he said, pressing on his bruise a little and then facing me. "Well then, I apologize for getting one of the most common bags to buy for traveling," he flashed a smile and just sucked out all that oxygen out of my body again. What the hell is he trying to do? Kill me? Gosh.

"One, it's not your fault," I gave him that puppy dog face again, "and three, you shouldn't be apologizing." "What's two?" he asked, heaving his bag onto one of those squeaky trolleys.

Uh-oh. "Two, its not THAT common. Look at it. It's so nice, with the tacky orange handle and the gaudy royal blue colour," nice save with a tint of sarcasm. Who knew I had it in me, ey?

"Nuh-uh-uh! The orange is tacky because it doesn't match your outfit."

"Oh, oh, and it matches with yours?" I teased, taking my stuff aside as he pushed his trolley away.

"It does! Look!" he showed off his orange camouflage printed shoes. "AND! The blue goes with the jeans," he shook his legs a little.

He was about three feet away from me and I had a good head to toe view of him. And he was right. It didn't look tacky next to him at all. He looked damn @\$\$ good in fact. "Okay, fine, you win," I gave in to his accurate cockiness. "Oh, you're good." I narrowed my eyes at him and he narrowed his eyes right

back at me.

For such an aggressive look, it felt like Charlie Sheen was looking right at me with his I'm-hot-lets-get-to-bed-look. This feeling in my knees made me feel like collapsing. There was something in the aura that made me feel like he was different. He was so... unusual.

"Calling for the owner of a blue bag with an orange handle!" an airport patrol officer spoke through a megaphone. "Again, calling for the owner of a blue bag with an orange handle."

The guy and I snapped out of our little trance when he said, "Whoa, how many people have this bag?" he asked, looking like a complete dumb head.

I looked at the direction of the officer and saw the guy fiddling with the exact same bag the guy had and it had a yellow troll hanging from the zip. It was my bag.

"It's my bag! What more proof do you want?" I exploded at the officer who didn't seem to believe that it was mine. So. Damn. Frustrating.

"It's odd that you don't padlock it," the officer said, fiddling with the zip. "If you had one and had the key, I could give it back to you."

"Why don't you believe me?"

"It's airport rules. Why don't you tell me what you have in this 'bag of yours'," he said annoyingly.

"GOSH! Why didn't you suggest that before, Robocop?" I mocked. "You'll find a box in there with a shoot load of thongs and also a small box of tampons you can only get in Chicago. HAPPY?" and he stubbornly slid the bag across the counter to me "Airport security these days!" I heaved the bag off the metal counter and walked off in a huff.

Not only did I have to waste half an hour of my time trying to convince that guy, I had to stop a pleasant conversation with one of the nicest, dorkiest guys I've ever met. Gosh. I didn't even get his name. In all this frustration, I kept on tripping over my own foot and my roller bag kept on turning over.

I think frustration had a way with me because when I reached the glass doors to the arrival hall, it didn't slide open and I walked right into it. I wobbled back a few steps before gaining full stability of my own body. A small fat kid on my right started laughing at me. His cap was obviously way too tight for his fat head. I stuck my tongue out at him and waited for the doors to slide open. When they finally did, I noticed many other people staring at me with the same look the fat kid had on his face.

Honestly. The nerve of people these days. Didn't their mums teach them it was rude to stare? Gosh. The people were parting like the red sea as I walked past them and it was getting really annoying, all these strange eyes looking at me just because I walked into a glass door. Okay, I know that sounds ridiculous. But still. Cut me some slack. Wrong bag, annoying officer, glass door. Gosh, could this day get any worse? I thought to myself.

Well, it didn't. Cos at the end of the 'Red Sea', instead of a clean land to start anew, which really doesn't sound like a bad idea, was something even better. Mr. Top Hat stood at the back of the crowd, geeky gaudy bag in one hand and a cup of hot steamy Starbucks in the other. So steamy, you could see that one long stream of steam coming out of the edge of the cup.

He had this smile on his face, the kind of smile that said, Hey, don't worry so much, love. Good things happen too. And here it is! He had that cocky kind of attitude. And usually that would bother me but this guy is pulling me out of Hades' pit of glaring death.

As stupid as I am, I glanced back to see if he was looking at someone else. I turned around and there was no one looking back at him, cos they all were still staring at me. Son of your dog. Gosh. I turned back to him and he was two feet away from me. I stopped. Cue for sheepish smile. And action!

"You better run, bruised-head monster is standing right ahead of you," I joked, touching my head and flinching a little.

"Monsters of the world are really misunderstood, ya know?" he said, like the most philosophical dork I've never met. "Here, this is for you," he extended his arm with the coffee to me. FOR ME? My god.

"No, I really shouldn't," I declined.

"Really?" he looked astonished. "Okay. More for me!"

He let go of his bag and opened the lid of the coffee and that pang of strong coffee smell just whipped me into Cloud 9. He lifted the cup to his lips but just before it hit his gorgeous well-formed lips, I noticed he was watching me with this face that just made my insides gurgle.

"Want it?" he asked.

"Yes!" I snatched it from him with a thank you and gave the coffee one big whiff. Ah, pleasure to the nose.

"Why don't I bring you and your coffee to someplace else. These people are giving ME the creeps," he gestured to the door that led to the outside of the airport. The air was chilly. The chilly night air of California. Home sweet home. Kind of. "Where are you staying? Do you stay here or...?"

"Yes, I stay here in a beach house with two very loud girls who can't sleep unless they have a cocktail after 11," sip of the coffee, "You?"

"Oh, I'm here on a job," aw, he wasn't staying long.

Casually, "As what?" and another sip of the coffee.

"Oh, just as..." he sounded like he was going to finish his sentence but he didn't. So mysterious. Couldn't stop shaking on the inside. That was just so I wouldn't laugh at everything he did. He was humorous and lovely and I've only known him for less than an hour. I looked at him with questioning eyes and he said into his watch, "Houston, we have a problem. I've been discovered."

"Haha, very funny!" I whacked his arm. Biceps. Mm.

"Well, here, you can take this cab first," he hailed a cab just by raising two fingers. A cab god. He opened the door and helped my bag in then held the door open for me. "And I'll see you around."

The coffee cup froze at my lips. "What?"

"What, what?" dorky smile.

"That's it?" my eyebrows burrowed. "The rescue, the coffee and now the cab that you unbelievable hailed without effort and that you are now sending me away in? What are you? A smooth son of a dog?" He smirked this time. "Hell yeah," he held my hand to let me in. His hands were soft as hell, "So I'll see you."

As convincing as he sounded that he'd never want to see me ever again, the look in his eyes just screamed, 'Don't worry, I've come up with something.' I decided to trust him and just get the hell out of there while the magic was still hanging in the air.

An hour's drive from the airport to my shared house, I didn't lift one finger off the cup Mr. Top Hat gave me. The taxi pulled up in the driveway of the beach house my pals and I managed to whip out. Not big like something you'd see Charlie Sheen staying in. Just a small cozy house to fit the three of us.

The cab driver asked for his fare of overpriced taxi rates and helped my bag out of the car. Too lazy to let go of the bag and too attached to let go of the coffee cup to get my keys to open the door, I used my elbow to ring the doorbell. And before ten seconds were up, two very cheerful girls were there at the door, looking like Santa just popped up.

Emma, typical blue eyed-blonde, model, not that tall but crazy pretty with brains. Unbelievable? Believe it. Koki, Japanese-American, really small, dark black hair, crazy pretty as well, brains of Einstein. No, not dyslexic.

"Oh my god, Sam! We've missed you!" the girls attacked me like dog on heat, forcing me to let go of one object in my hand. Coffee or bag? Coffee or bag? Bag, of course. I let the handle slip through my fingers

so I could hold one of their backs.

"How's your mum?" Emma asked, as she usually would.

"Instead of saying, 'Honey, welcome home,' she said, 'Where's Emma, how come she's not here?'" we laughed. But it was a hundred percent true. "How's the house?" I looked around, hoping not to see anything broken. Koki took my bag for me and dragged it into the living room.

"We managed to fix it up just before you arrived," Koki said. "Don't look under rugs, the wood has swelled up with alcohol stains."

WHAT?

"JOKE!" Koki yelled out before I could. Thank god.

"Gosh. NEVER pull that sort of shoot on me," I put a hand to my heart. But when my feet gained its strength again, I chased the girls to the couch where we ended up wrestling. Ah, the good days. Three best friends on a beach house in California. Nothing could get better than this.

And then I noticed, in all the wrestling, I dropped my coffee cup. I leaped over the coffee table and took it off the floor quickly.

"Whoa, what the hell was that?" Emma asked, sitting up on our sofa, glaring over the edge of the coffee table.

"Are you alright?" Koki.

I placed the coffee cup carefully on the table and smiled like a dork. Oh, dork. The word dork reminds me of Mr. Top Hat.

"What. Is. That?" Koki asked, staring at the Starbucks cup.

"A Starbucks drink. Empty. Duh," Emma said.

"Well done, Sherlock," Koki mocked.

"No, but yeah. Like Koki said, what's that?" Emma asked again, leaning forward and looking at me with her fingers reaching for the cup, trying to figure out whether I'd let her take it. I nodded and two of her perfectly manicured fingers whiffed it off the table.

"See, long story short. Took the wrong bag, was his, my bag was in the claim counter, got stressed, got my bag, hit into a glass door, got stared at, guy came up to me with coffee and a joke. Perfect knight in shining armor. Well, more like dork in beat up top hat."

"One hell of an airport fairytale," Koki sighed as she played with the tussle of the pillow. "Got his name?"

"NO! That's the problem. He saved me from embarrassment, then sent me off in a cab," I explained, climbing back over the table to join the girls. "I call him Mr. Top Hat and—"

"JM," Emma murmured.

"What?" Koki and I said simultaneously.

"You know how the coffee dude writes your initials on your cup when you order?" she looked at the cup again, "Well yeah, Mr. Top Hat's initials are JM."

"Emma, you ARE Sherlock! Give it here," Koki said and snatched the cup. "What kind of a J did he look like?"

"James?" Emma suggested.

"Hells no."

"Jonathan?"

"Hells no."

"Jack?"

"Hells no."

"Aw, I give up," Emma sighed, exhausted already.

"Hey, at least we know his initials," Koki said, placing the cup back on the table.

"That's as far as we'll get for tonight I guess," I yawned. "I'm beat."

"We'll find out more about Mr. Top Hat tomorrow," Koki announced, getting off the sofa to go to her

room. "Night babes, nice to have you home."

Emma did just about the same thing. Got up and said, "I'll second that. Nights!"

After they both went up the stairs, I just stayed there staring at the cup.

The only thing that was running through my head was JM. JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM JM.

## 2 - Surrealism Mixed With Peanuts

9am, my eyes split open. The shimmer of spring sunshine seeped between the wooden blinds in my room and that pang of good feeling hit me from my heart to my toes. I reached over for my phone and saw the pretty mermaid on the Starbucks cup smiling to me a happy good morning. A really good morning it was. I flipped my phone open and it read, '1 new message'.

MORNING, SUNSHINE! GLAD 2 HAV U BAK. COME TO THE BAR AT 3. SHOW TONIGHT SO WE NEED XTRA HANDS FOR SET UP N DRINKS. LOVE, LOVE.

My boss, Stu. The most British guy I've ever met. His accent so thick but so attractive. Nice guy. Love him. Not in that way of course. He came to America after he finished his degree in culinary arts in England and decided to open a club. The Mist. It's an underground kind of place with the feels of those movies where people dressed in black turtlenecks and berets drink and perform deep stuff.

Down at the Mist I work as a bartender. Occasionally, I'd sing some stuff, but only when the people weren't looking. Not much of a center stage person.

I slipped out of bed to get ready and was greeted at the bottom of the stairs with a bright smile from Emma the blonde.

"Good morning, you!" Emma beamed, sipping on some orange juice.

"Someone's uber happy," something smelt good. "What's that gorgeous smell?" I asked, taking a sip out of her orange juice. Emma nodded towards the kitchen where a soft sizzling sound was coming from.

It was Koki at the stove frying up some bacon that smelt heavenly.

"Koki, what's the occasion?"

"You're home! After two weeks! Do you know how quiet it was in the house?" she jabbed her tiny hands onto her waist. "And I had to save Emma from EVERYTHING! It's so much better when you were around doing it."

"What a welcome, ey?" I mocked, taking a seat at the kitchen table. "I got a text from Stu."

"Already? Babe, you just came back!" Koki complained as if she was the one who needed to go to work.

"Oh really! What did he say?" Emma slid into the chair next to me and pried my phone open. Emma has this crazy high school girl crush on Stu. "Honestly, when will he ask ME out?" and yes, Stu is the McSteamy of Grey's in my life.

"I have to be at work at 3. Some performers are coming and I've gotta make 'em drinks," I took some more of Emma's orange juice.

Koki laid bacon on a huge plate and placed it on the table, "Sam's drinks are the best!"

We all tucked into the bacon and gosh. Know that feeling when the food melts in the mouth? Well yeah, this is exactly it, but it LITERALLY melts. I don't know how she does it! "Well," I said after swallowing, "You girls wanna come and help us set up? You know how interesting the performers at The Mist are." I wiggled my eyebrows.

"I GOT DIBS ON THE FRONT SEAT!" Emma yelped out of her seat. "Oh, please, please, please let me go! I haven't been able to see Stu in two weeks!" she shook my shoulders. Hard.

I agreed to let her come with me despite that feeling of being used then turned to Koki to ask her if she was coming.

"Can't. I've got two luncheons to cook for and these people are paying me some serious kachings!" and I wonder why she never went into Culinary Arts. She's doing Photography Arts instead. Well, at least they're both some arts stuff. "And when I get my pay, I'll come down tonight to buy some drinks that are NOT on the house this time," she shot a look at me.

"Settled!"

I stood outside of the Mist and took in a quick whiff of the lavender scent coming from it. Such a comforting smell after two weeks away from a place I really call 'home'. I stared at the unlit neon lights of the club but felt the heat coming from it already. The place was so intense and filled with personality that everyday at work was a pleasure.

The whole spiritual observation thing got interrupted when I saw, in the corner of my eye, Emma fidgeting to go inside. I put out my right hand on her shoulder to make her stop moving. "Just. One. More. Second."

"Let's go already! Before my hair frizzes up!" she ran her long fingers threw blonde hair.

"Alright, alright. Gosh," she grabbed my hand and I let her lead me through the door, down the stairs, through another door and into the club. I glanced at the old wooden clock hung above the stage.

Three-o-two. Just nice. When the door banged close behind us, Stu looked up and smiled.

And once again, from the corner of my eye, I saw Emma's pearly whites practically jump out of her mouth.

"There are my sweethearts!" Stu dropped the cables he was untangling and marched up to us throwing us hugs and making Emma spazz in his arms. "I'm so sorry for taking you in right after your trip last night, Sam! But we really need you," he glanced back at the bar where a young boy was standing, studying the liquor bottles and turned back to whisper, "The new boy is hopeless. Please teach him your magic!"

I looked over Stu's shoulder at the boy. Fresh out of high school and would only know things such as kegs and vodka on the rocks. Shouldn't be a problem, I thought. "Sure thing, Stu. Glad to be back. Seriously. So where can I start?"

"Go teach new boy how to do you're Bourne Ultimanium and make a few, please," he nodded towards some men stressing out over their instruments. A black guy with cool hair and a white guy with a cap on backwards. Didn't look really dark but I thought I was in for a surprise. The rest I couldn't really see since the were head deep into cables and lights. "Emma," Emma's face just turned as bright as the white light at the end of the tunnel. "Come with me, there's a really cool suit I just bought and I need a model's advice," Stu dragged her away fast but not fast enough cos Emma managed to turn around and give me a, 'Oh. Em. Gee!'"

I headed over to the back of the bar where the poor boy was now sitting on the stool. "Hey, kid," I said, taking off my sweater and hanging it up. "What's your name?"

"Jeremy," he said, looking tense. Hmm. Jeremy. JM. Nah.

"Hey, Jeremy. I'm Samara but call me Sam. How new are you?"

"Too new. I heard about your killer drinks and I just don't know how to make them. Saw the menu but all my results tasted like blended eggs," he joked.

"Haha. Don't worry! Here I'll show you," I took a glass from the top shelf and got the ingredients ready.

"Do you know whose performing tonight? Is it those guys?" I nodded towards Cool Hair and Back Cap.

"Nah, I heard they're part of the band. The main guy's late. Real late. Apparently only gonna show before it starts. He's busy fixing that dude with the cool hair's bongos and strings on his guitar," he explained an explanation a little too detailed.

I narrowed my eyes at Jeremy, "Are you like... a stalker?" and he burst out laughing.

"Sam, you have NO idea," he said a little too convincingly. But whatever. I showed Jeremy step by step how to do my drink, told him to give it a shot and I gave it a taste.

"Almost there. Just when you shake the drink, it's all in the wrist," I winked and watched him take down mental notes. Spent several hours with Jeremy just talking to him and asking him about graduation and



shoot like that. Nice boy, a little insecure but filled with a different kind of enthusiasm.

Before we all knew it, it was five to seven thirty and the early birds were hitting the front tables of the club. One thing about this place was that performances were early and then tables would be cleared later for dancing. How do we ship tables back and forth? Easy. Wheels on the feet of the table. Duh. Koki's idea.

The singer of the band still hadn't shown up and Stu was starting to really panic. He jogged to the bar and hit his pals onto the counter, "Sam, the guy isn't here yet. The guests already paid me! And if he doesn't come, we're going to have to serve them free drinks that cost more than the five dollar show price!" Stu panicked. I poured him a shot and he downed it like water.

"Babe, chill. I'm sure he'll be here. His band look pretty laid back. I think they KNOW he's going to be here," I smiled trying to make poor Stu feel better. "Whose the stud anyway?"

"I'm sorry, darling but I'm not really in the mood to make small talk."

"C'mon, I'm helping you calm your nerves. It's either small talk or a barf-a-thon in the toilet after two more free shots," I suggested. "So, tell me. What's the guy's name?"

"Jason Mraz," he mentioned. Jason. Sounded more like the guy last night. Mraz—oh my god. JM. Jason Mraz. Okay, spazz attack. My heart pace was rising. It can't be, I thought. "He's really awesome. Writes his own songs, his own melo--."

"I'M HERE! I'M HERE!" someone burst out into the club.

Stu's face calmed, "Oh, thank God!" he scooted from the bar to the guy holding a pair of bongos and a guitar slung around his body. The entrance was dark and I made a mental note to fix that. The guy came into the light.

Forget racing heartbeats. My heart just stopped completely.

"Hit the stage quick and plug in your guitar, the place is full already!" Stu told Mr. Top Hat to run and he did. He plugged in his acoustic guitar into an amplifier and slung it over his shoulder. Stu made his way back to me.

"Whoa, babe. Why are you looking like that?" Stu asked. I was still holding my breath; I probably turned blue. "Okay, you're not answering. Must be no good. I'll go get Emma for you," he said and rushed.

Blue-eyed blonde appeared in front of me in no time. Go Super Stu. "Babe! BREATHE!" she punched me in the stomach that forced me to gasp for air. "Okay, slowly tell me, what is the matter."

I nodded towards the stage where Jason was tapping on the mike. He shook his head and Stu flew straight to the sound system.

"Dorky. Attractive. But don't see why you lost your breath," Emma analyzed.

"No, no. Don't you know what that guy's name is?"

"Never occurred to me to ask. WHY? Gosh. Stop playing games with me, woman!"

"Jason Mraz."

"Hey! Does the name Jason suit you—Oh. Em. Gee," oh! Light bulb!

"Bingo, motherfracker!" I said. Just then the microphone screeched and Jason started to speak.

"Hello, everyone," oh, the sound of his voice. "This show is rated PG-15, so sir," he nodded to a very young looking man in the corner, "please leave the club," and the place burst in laughter. "Just joking, sir."

"Already so hilarious," Emma whispered, looking back at Jason.

"My name's Jason Mraz and here's a song," he strummed on his guitar, "You know, when you meet someone so different, so intense, so... unusual, your insides just wanna explode. Well, here's a song I wrote quite a while back, haven't performed it in a while, but I had this sudden urge to sing it today. Here's So Unusual." Guitar chords filled in the atmosphere. Deep, dark chords.

"Guy's got skills," Emma.

"Emma, shh!"

"This is the most unusual story of a most unusual girl," he started singing, beats coming in and deep bass lines from a cello entering as well. The sound wasn't loud but I could feel my heart vibrating. Jason had his eyes closed and his lips so close to the mike. So intense.

His voice so sharp but so soothing at the same time. The lyrics made so much sense, "She's so sweet, so discreet, she's exactly what I need not even make believe," just sent shivers down my spine. He seemed like HE was make believe but yet he was so far from it. And that was such a damn advantage.

"Not so you," he finished the song, the flute finished with a little melody, the cello took a long note and the bongos gave a finishing touch. The crowd burst into applause, some shouting out comments for Jason.

Jason performed two more songs, Summer Breeze and a rendition of Melt With You. Both songs just turned my muscles into ice. I am SO lucky that I didn't have to serve any special cocktails during the period of time he was performing.

Jason said, "We're breaking now and I'm gonna hit the bar. Come say hi, drop a request and maybe a drink too, yeah?" he said and I saw the women in the crowd smile intently. He placed his guitar down against a stool on stage and grabbed his cello buddy to hit the bar.

I fell to the floor to hide behind the counter. Jeremy looked at me weirdly and I mouthed to the dimwit, "Just go!"

I heard the stool on the other side of the wooden bar move and clutched my heart. The anxiety was building up so quickly, I thought I was going to pass out. I slid open the cupboard closest to me and pulled out a bottle to take a swig of. Didn't care what it was; I just needed something to calm my nerves. I mean, dude, I was JUST obsessing over this guy last night.

And then I remembered. I remembered that look that he gave me that made me so sure he'd find me. But I think this was just a goddamn coincidence. He's probably a God or something. Talent, genius lyrics, attractive, sexy, and a psycho psychic!

"Jason! Look! PEANUTS!" Cello Guy exclaimed a little too excitedly.

"Ian Sheridan scores again!" I heard them crunch on some peanuts.

Jeremy leaned on the counter, "What will you have, Mr. Mraz?" he asked.

Please ask for a beer, please ask for a beer, please ask for a beer, my head chanted, since a beer was the only thing Jeremy prepared that night. "Nicest drink you have here," I just KNEW he was going to say that.

"Oh, for that, you're gonna need the creator to make it for you," Dimwit said. GRH! "Sam?" he gestured.

Oh, thanks a lot, Jeremy. What am I going to say? What if I spazz so much that he doesn't like me? I mean, first he was just a dorky attractive guy but now he's a dorky, talented, sexy, future telling, attractive genius! I pulled my red hair out of my face and got ready to face the Jason.

He was peeping over the counter when I got up to face him. I thought, if he doesn't remember me, my world is going to drown in humiliation.

But my world didn't end. Hell, I think a whole new world just started.

### 3 - Your Pranks, My Heartbeats

I saw the peanut get jammed in his throat. Well, not literally, but well enough that his face scrunched up and he gently beat his chest with his fist. I froze too because, goddamn was it good to see him up this close again. I mean, I know I only just saw him last night but after thinking about him that long, it was great to let my mind rest and let my eyes get to work.

"It's you," he said, soft but sweet, one corner of lips rising.

"Mr. Top Hat," I nodded, saying his nickname to him.

His eyes sparkled so bright even though the bar was the darkest part of the club. His hands instinctively moved his beanie into place, covering the tip of his ears. "How are you?" he managed. I didn't blame him for taking so long to reply, I couldn't even breathe.

"I'm good," I started. Good start, I told myself. "Better than last night at least," one, two, three... eight words. Perfect.

"Last night was pretty rough, ey?" he raised an eyebrow.

"But the Starbucks saved me," I sighed, the thought of my very own fairytale rescue ringing in my head.

"Thanks. Talking about drinks, what can I get you boys?"

Ian said, "Your special. This kid here says you are the maker of the special. So yes, your special please."

I whipped up the drink in a jiff and placed the two short glasses in front of the guys. "How much?" Jason asked, taking out his wallet.

"Aw, don't worry about it, Mr. Top Hat. It's for the Starbucks you got me," I winked. Smooth, Sam, smooth. Keep it going, buddy.

"Alright!" he exclaimed excitedly. "But hey, what about him? He didn't get you anything." And Ian gave Jason the why'd-you-have-to-tell-her look.

"Oh yeah, I was getting to that. That would be five dollars please," I said, watching Ian's face drop.

"Gosh, just joking. It's on the house. Go ahead, take a drink."

"So hey," Jason started again. "We haven't officially met. My name's Jason Mraz," he gave me his hand. I took his hand and slowly, both our fingers started wrapping gently. His hand was as soft as yesterday. One firm shake and we retrieved to cut all awkward strings.

"I'm Samara White. Sam would do fine," I smiled. As calmed as I looked like on the outside, there was an earthquake going on in my heart. I was so goddamn nervous.

Jason downed the drink and excused himself, "I have to get back on there. Few more songs then I'll be done. Save me a dance for the after party?"

"I'll be here," I said, my breath seizing to help me. Jason trotted towards the stage and Rhys managed to shoot me a thumbs up. For what, I have no idea. When I turned to face the mirror behind me, Jeremy stood there with a smug look on his face.

"What was that all about?" he asked, looking so goddamn cheeky.

"Rule one about working at the bar here with me," I said, trying to cover myself up a little. "No giving free drinks to people you don't know or are not regulars here."

"And you're telling me you know that guy?" Jeremy nodded towards Jason. "You guys JUST introduced yourselves!"

"THAT is a different case. AND a long story."

"I've got time," Jeremy said, glancing at his watch. "I get off at 1 and oh look! It's only 8.15. Lucky me!"

"Shut up, kid," I sat on the stool and watched Jason sing. In all that dorkiness, from the hat to the weird

shirt and the scuffed shoes, there was so much passion in him, his music, his singing and everything. I couldn't tear my eyes away from it. It was so hard to even scratch an itch on my back because I was too afraid that if I moved, I'd wake up from this dream.

But then again, it wasn't a dream. It was all a reality I wasn't ready to face. He was so perfect. Polite, nice, friendly and gosh, talented as hell. Praises for him wouldn't stop running in my head.

He finished a couple of requests the audience had for him in his very own mysterious kind of style of songs and sat on the stage while watching the crew move the table to the sides. I watched him watch the people moving around, like he was taking notes and writing it down in a journal in his head.

And then all of a sudden he looked up at me, and I froze. I didn't stop breathing this time though. His eyes were locked onto mine and he didn't look awkward to be watched or anything. I wouldn't call it a smile, but it looked like one. It was the kind of smile where like if someone stared at a bright light for too long he'd start seeing stars? Yeah, it was like that. I was staring so long that a smile suddenly started to form.

Soft music started playing when the dance floor was cleared out and Jason stood up. NOW I stopped breathing. He was walking towards the bar and I quickly, like a doofus, looked around to see if there were any other women he might be walking up to. He slid his arms onto the counter and leaned close to my face.

"How about that dance?" he asked, calm and friendly. I glanced over at Jeremy and he said he'll take care of the bar. I followed Jason onto the dance floor where I let him place my hands where he wants them to be which turned out to be around the back of his neck. He carefully placed his hands on my waist, not too close to the @\$\$.

The soft music played in the background. It wasn't a slow love song or anything. It was Creep by Radiohead. But my kind of song to dance to with a guy.

"So why?" he suddenly spoke, his face not so close to mine. His body wasn't up against mine or anything. We were still in the comfort zone. And he was so good at taking things quick but slowly.

"Why what?" I asked, unsure.

"Why did you appear so quickly after we met? I mean, aren't you supposed to let me eat out of my misery for at least a week before you appear again," he asked, as if I was the Prince Charming appearing before the witch and the apple scene.

"Timing isn't exactly fond of me," I mentioned. "And besides, aren't you the one that's supposed to let me eat out of my misery? I am supposed to be the damsel in distress, after all." I rolled my eyes jokingly.

"Well, yeah. That WAS the plan. I had it all planned out, you know? Like place posters of my concert next week in all the Starbucks I can find near beach housing area, you know, since you seemed so fond of coffee. And then when concert night comes, I'd find you at my stage door, waiting for me with that you're-my-knight-in-shining-armor look on your face," he mentioned in one long deep breath. "And then YOU had to ruin the plan by working here and appearing BEFORE scheduled in my head... at my preview show!"

"Well, Jason, you didn't exactly tell me you were a performer! Because if you didn't know already, a LOT of new performers come here to unwind and play in their first week here in California!"

"WELL, Sam, I didn't exactly tell you my name either so why would I go into my whole life story about me being a performer?"

"Ah, shoot. You got me there, genius," I sighed and laughed with him. This wave of comfort washed over me when I heard his laugh. "I'm glad you found me," what the hell did I just say? Where is that coming from?

"I'm glad I'm such a genius to have did," he said, making me shake inside with laughter.

"You're so full of yourself," I felt my grip around his neck get tighter, bringing the two of us together. Oh my god, since when did I have this much confidence do this? He let go of my waist and pulled me closer

to him by holding his wrists behind my back.

"Hey, look, I'm going down to the beach the day after tomorrow to do a free show for anyone who wants to watch, you wanna come with?" he asked, lowering his voice even though the music was already soft. "Well, it'll be Sunday, I'll be off work," I had my schedule run through my mind, "I think it should be okay." "Okay it is!" he smiled. "Be here at ten-thirty in the morning and I'll take you with the band okay?" he said.

"Okay it is," I mimicked and just then I heard Stu call out for Jason from the corner of the club. Jason didn't take his eyes off me but yelled out a 'Hold on,' to Stu.

He leaned in closer to my face, making my heart beat pace up like the roadrunner. Beep, beep! I thought I was going to faint in his arms, but I thought if I had to faint, sure as hell it should be in his arms. From his eyes, I stared down at his lips that were getting closer to mine. Just when I thought the fireworks were going to explode inside me, he just brushed... brushed... his nose on mine, turned around and walked over to Stu.

Without even saying goodbye, he swept me off my feet.

Without even saying goodbye, he left. Oh my god. He freaking left! He went to Stu, Stu took him to his office and then he left. Stu came out alone, Jason was nowhere to be found, and the band had gone through the front door in a split second.

"STU!" I yelled out, even though the music was off, the atmosphere was still and the club was ready to be closed.

"Yes, Sam?" he walked over to me.

"Where did he go?" I asked, my face flushed.

"Who, love?"

"Don't act stupid with me, 'love'. Not in the mood!" I said, looking around just in case he was still in the building.

"Relax! He had to go. Some shoot came up," Stu said, his smug suddenly wiped clean off his face. My heart fell so hard. My head started ranting, why didn't he say goodbye? Did I say something wrong? All these worries hit me in an instant and I felt like shoot. Emma sat next to me behind the bar and just watched me think.

"Babe, don't fret. He found you once, he'll find you again."

I didn't look at her. The night was going so well and it all came down in a crash. I mean, honestly, what went wrong? I felt the muscles around my heart squeeze fresh heart juice tight. He had me already and now he just disappears. Not a good night.

Emma drove me home with a bottle of mixed shoot that we were both drinking from. Got through the front door of my house and Koki was there reading a magazine, not asleep yet, waiting for her 2 am drink. I tossed over the bottle and she asked me, "Whoa, babe. What's wrong?"

"Come on, Sam. Tell her the good news! Be happy about it."

"What? What good news?" Koki jumped, alert.

I just sat down and kept quiet. Thinking and thinking and thinking.

"Oh, come on, Sam! Tell me!"

"Forget it, she won't spill," Emma gave up, "Mr. Top Hat was there at Mist tonight! Can you believe it? His name is Jason and..."

Their voices and squeals started fading. Half conscious, I slowly crept away from them, crawled up the stairs and crawled into bed without changing. I probably smelt like shoot but I couldn't give a damn. Being shoot was worse anyway.

Saturday passed by like nothing. I was a zombie the whole day. Hardly spoke, served drinks, never

smiled, didn't dance, didn't teach poor Jeremy anything. I dressed like rubbish in a sweater and sweatpants and bad runners. I didn't do my hair right, I couldn't be bothered to.

And then Sunday morning, I felt my body awaking but my eyes weren't open. The birds were singing again but this time, it felt mellow. The sun was shining again of course but this time, it felt hot and annoying. I didn't want to get out bed, I didn't want to do anything. This was supposed to be the Sunday I spend at the beach with Jason, but after leaving so suddenly that Friday night, I wasn't sure whether he was going to show at the mist this morning or not.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Someone knocked on my door. "ARE YOU AWAKE?" Koki yelled from outside my room door. "Are you alive?"

"No. Dead as a rotting rat," I groaned, placing the pillow over my head, hoping to drown Koki out.

"Well, revive yourself, woman! Stu's here with a note from Jason!"

I sat up in my bed too quickly, my head started spinning. I stumbled off my bed and ran to the door, flinging it open with a bang. "You gotta be shooting me right?" I asked, so dead serious.

"Go see for yourself, he's downstairs."

I leaped down the stairs in my pajamas and saw Stu sitting on the couch with a letter in his hands. He got up and offered me a hug but I attacked the letter instead. He jumped aside, refusing to give it to me until I gave him a hug. A pat on the back and the letter was mine. MWAHAHA.

"How are you doing today?"

"Same like yesterday, same like Friday night," I said, eager to open the letter. I tore open the envelope and threw aside, pulling out the white paper that sat inside.

"Wait... before you read that..." Stu was warning me but I started reading it anyway.

Samara,

Hey. I'm sorry I didn't get to say goodbye that night and you have no idea how much I regret not doing so. Because I've got news for you (I don't know whether it would be good or bad) and I only found out early this morning. I have to leave for Indiana for an urgent record meeting and performance. It was very sudden and I'm so beat inside out that I won't able to take you out today for the beach performance like I said I would. It was really nice meeting you though and I hope I get to see you again soon.

Jason.

Or as you like to call me, Mr. Top Hat.

Remember that Friday night when I said my heart fell? Well, this time it got unattached from the veins and fell right down to my bowls. I let the letter slip from my fingers, disappointed. I never knew I'd get so beat up over a guy like this. Well, maybe it was the fact that he was one of the greatest guys I've met in ages and that I took hell of a lot of interest in him.

He cut off all connections just like that. With a letter. Ouch, nothing could hurt more than this. The letter didn't even cover the whole page. "Babe, I'm so sorry. I know how excited you were for today," Stu said, slowly making his way to the door. "Come, walk me to the door."

I did like he told me to. He was my boss after all. I opened the door for him and let him out, finally able to speak, "Thanks, Stu. Would rather have this then have been stood up," I said, meaning it. Cos honestly, it's true. The warning is way better than me waiting like a retard in front of the Mist alone.

"Take care, babe. Why don't we go for tea later?"

"We'll see about that, Stu. But thanks for the offer," I didn't feel like letting my misery out on anyone.

"Okay, love. Goodbye," he left and I closed the door behind him. Two steps away from the door, the doorbell rang. I scanned the room to see if Stu left anything and then turned back to the door.

Opening it I said, "I don't think you left anything this time, Stu," I said. But when I looked up, not only was it NOT Stu. It was my life coming back to life. Jason stood in front of me with a cardboard saying 'Just

joking!' in very bad handwriting. "Son of your dog!" I yelled but laughed my @\$ off. I picked up my newspaper and threw it at him.

"Haha! 'Rather this than have been stood up'?" he repeated after what I said earlier.

"NOT FUNNY, Jason," I said, sighing and pushing my hair out of my face.

"Yeah, it was not funny," he said, facial expression changing in an instant, "It was HILARIOUS!" he laughed even harder.

I huffed and leaned on the doorframe, waiting for him to stop laughing his lungs out. He finally heaved a sigh and got himself together.

"Do you hate me that much or do you still wanna go to the beach concert with me?" he asked, turning over the cardboard where it showed, 'Please?'

I stared at his pleading look, which, I have to say, made me give in, in an instant. But I wasn't about to show that, was I? "Wait here, I'll go get changed," I said, smiling like a 'tard. So much for not showing it.